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Allegiances

Bloodclan

Leader: Scourge- A tiny black tom with a single white paw.

Deputy: Bone- A broad shouldered black and white tom.

Cats:

Flint- A tabby tom with long claws and gray eyes.

Leaf- A broad shouldered ginger and white she-cat with green eyes.

Ribbon- Ginger and white she-cat with yellow eyes (Mother to Abyss (black she-cat with green eyes) and Ghost (black she-cat with yellow eyes)).

Cracked Brick- A russet tom with brown paws and a brown underbelly.

Wyvern- Brown she-cat with black tabby markings.

Jynx- Ginger she-cat with a white chest.

Pine- Black tom with brown paws and ears, and green eyes.

Cascade- A gray tom with blue eyes.

Rock- Gray tom with two black front paws.

Rabbit- Brown tom with black dapples and amber eyes.

Willow- White she-cat with brown eyes.

Shade- Gray and white tom with amber eyes.

Shadow- Tall black tom with yellow eyes.

Thorn- Golden tom with green eyes.

Stripe- A gray tabby tom.

Red- Russet she-cat with a white tipped tail.

Fawn- Small brown she-cat with white specks.

Cats outside of Clans

Pawprint- A friendly tabby and white kittypet.

Hawk- A tall tabby tom kittypet.

Rainstorm- A gray tom kittypet.

Feather- A light brown tabby she cat with blue eyes (Mother to Rose (Light brown tabby she-cat with amber eyes)).

Prologue

The light brown tabby she-cat wailed in grief outside the wrecked wooden fence. She pressed her pink, cold nose into the tom's drenched fur. "No!" She shrieked in agony, collapsing beside him, weak with misery.

Through the wind she could hear a distant calling. She recognized the voice of Pawprint the kittypet, but didn't move. Looking up, she could see the dark clouds moving quickly. The storm would be back any minute now. Cringing when the wind came again, she knew she had no choice. She had to take shelter. It was for her health, she couldn't afford to get sick. She bent down and whispered in the tabby tom-cat's ear. "I'm so, so sorry. I'll take care of our kits."

With that she licked his paw, and ran down the path. She rounded the corner and leaped up the stone steps to find Pawprint standing just beyond her cat flap, amber eyes wide with terror. "You're here! Come in, quick! I can hear the thunder." At that moment lightning seared the sky, making the two she-cats jump. Pawprint leaped inside the twoleg den, beckoning her to follow. Hesitating, she shook out her wet pelt and leaped in after, shivering in cold, she followed Pawprint, stiff-legged. She sat down beside her in her kittypet nest. "I'm glad I could rely on you," The tabby murmured. "Thank you so much."

Chapter 1

Rose woke, a stream of light floating through the glass window, past the dying plants in pots that the two-legs once placed by their nest wall. Now she was fully aware of her surroundings, curled by her mother on the cold, wooden floor. A wave of hunger surged through her empty stomach, and she let out a pitiful moan. "Mama, I'm hungry. Mama, please!"

Her mother woke, looking at Rose warily. "I'm sorry, dear--I have no milk for you." The weariness in eyes was easily seen, and her fur was a long way from being neat.

Rose slumped down, gazing around at what the Twolegs left behind. Their loud box, their fresh kill pile, and some pelts. Jumping up she ran down the hall and veered into a room-a bright color that looked like the sky when sun was falling. She sat, looking around, admiring the pretty color.

She heard a creak behind her, and she looked behind her to see her mother. "These are hard times. I know you never saw my twolegs, and I know you don't understand most of it. You are a young kit, after all. But sometimes I regret being with our twolegs." She looked down at her paws, but Rose was confused why she did so. She lifted one, examining it sadly. "But more than ever we need them to feed us. I can't hunt, believe me, i've tried." The defeat in her face was easy to see.

"Mama," Rose said in a curious tone. "What's hunting?"

"Chasing down prey for food," She murmured. She lifted her head. "I never wanted to do this, but... It's the only chance we still have. Rose, I am determined for you to live."

Rose stiffened, terror welling up inside her at hearing her mother hint that they were going to die. "What did you never want to do?"

Her mother sighed. "Follow me."

Before Rose knew it, they were squeezing out through the back window from the twoleg's dirtplace. She watched as her mother's tabby pelt dissapeared, and she launched up to stand on the windowsill. She leaped down, landing with a clang on a black twoleg path. She watched as it spiraled down to a dark alley. "Why do twolegs want to live so high?" Rose asked, disgusted, as she followed her mother down.

"I don't know," She replied shortly and continued.

A few minutes passed, where her mother didn't speak at all. After some hesitation, she mewed, "Mama, are you mad at me?"

"No," she answered.

A couple more minutes passed. "I'm tired." Rose stopped where she was, panting.

Her mother hesitated, then turned around. "Not far now." She picked her up by the scruff, and they were only walking for a couple of seconds before cats yowled in the distance, and she saw them skidding around a brick building and race towards them. Rose gasped, but her mother just put her down and stood in front of her. Between her mother's legs, she could see four cats advancing, hissing. They then blocked the exit, backs arched. "You're on Bloodclan territory!" A black and white tom spat, stepping forward.

Her mother looked calm, but she could see the tip of her tail twitching. "We have come to join Bloodclan."

Chapter 2

Another large tom with a tabby pelt stepped forward with a smirk. "And what makes you think you can join us? You're just little kittypets, who think we will offer protection to you. That's not how it works." He unsheathed long talons, eyes wild with madness.

By now everyone was lashing their tails. The black and white tom slashed his claws over the tabby's nose. He gasped with pain and shock, instantly crouching down and gazing up at him. "I make the decisions, not you, Flint." He snarled. Rose gasped in shock. *Why would he hurt him?* "You two--come with me. Now. Since you entered our territory you're either joining or get killed." With a grin he added, "Don't think too strongly about surviving."

Rose whimpered, following her mother in terror. Where had her mother taken her?

They followed the group of cats who were in a circle around them now, guiding them down the back of twolegplace. A foul stench came to her nose, and she held in the urge to yowl. Finally they took a sharp turn down a narrow space, to emerge to a concrete clearing with a single, large and old twoleg dumpster bin. Cats lined the area, fur bristling, eyes wild and gazing at a small she-cat in the center, whimpering, claw marks on her side. Her senses were filled with fear scent from her, as a kit walked forward towards her. Blinking, she realized it wasn't a kit. His face showed he was older than one, and his icy blue eyes locked on the small tortoiseshell in the center. She whimpered again. "Scourge, *please.* Let me leave! I'm sorry!"

Scourge snarled. "Do you think a cat messes with Bloodclan and gets away with it?" He stepped forward, revealing a collar. Every hair on her pelt stood up. The collar was decorated with dog and cat teeth! Did these cats kill for fun?

"I didn't do anything!" she gasped, bewildered, as he screeched,

leaping upon her and raking his claws down her back. She let out a wail of pain, as he whipped around and flicked his claws down her throat. There was a gurgle of blood, and then all went quiet.

Rose pressed into her mothers side. Almost instantly the cats turned to face us. Scoruge's eyes narrowed. "Bone, who have you brought us? More tresspassers?"

Bone, the large black and white cat stepped forward. "These two want to join our clan." The patrol stepped away, although two cats from the back nodded to one another and left to block the alley that was the exit from the clearing. Rose and her mother stood in the clearing, alone.

"I am Feather, and this is my kit Rose," She introduced us, and Rose trembled. "We'd like to join your clan," She confirmed what Bone had said.

Scourge smirked. "The kit can be trained to hate and forget to past. But you, Feather, are not trusted. You are to fight Leaf, here," He pushed her forward, "And win. If you do so, you will be able to join. And to win... You kill the other cat."

Leaf was also a she-cat, a white and ginger tabby. Her eyes were a fierce green, which also matched her collar. Her stance was powerful, showed confidence. Rose shrank back. Leaf was big-- Feather couldn't beat her.

Now Feather lost it. "But, Scourge!" She wailed. "My twolegs took my claws. I can't fight."

Scourge glared at her. "Then you will be of no use. You asked to join, the battle has started. Weakness will be pushed aside." Scourge nodded to Leaf. "Kill her."

Chapter 3

Feather gasped in shock. Rose shrieked, leaping forward, only to smack into another cat. He grabbed her scruff with a growl, pulling her aside and holding her there. Leaf's evil grin spread, and she leaped, as Feather wailed in terror, rushing away, but the twolegplace cats had already made a circle around them. Leaf hissed, long talons unsheathing more, and she yowled, leaping onto Feather. Feather's hindlegs kicked up, and there was gasping and shuffling until she saw Leaf on top of her mother, pinning her down. With a snarl she sank her needle-sharp claws into her neck. Feather squirmed, choking. With every move Feather made to resist, Leaf's claws sank deeper until she saw Feather's tail tip twitch once, and her tense and fearful stance droop limp. Leaf stood back, licking her blood-red claws. "That showed her, Scourge. She's dead."

Scourge purred in satisfaction, and walked up to the dead body. Lifting his claws, he pulled the chin to tail tip open.

The cat let Rose go and she screeched, running forwards until she crouched beside her mother. "No..." She whispered, terribly hurt. She stood by her head, licking her ears, heart shattered. Scourge bowled her away, eyes cold. "Ribbon. Get over here." He ordered, and a ginger cat walked over, head down in respect. "Take the kit to your den. You better get her under control."

Ribbon dipped her head and with a flash she was by Rose's side, picking her up by the scruff. Rose snarled, writhing. "Let me go." Ribbon slammed her against the ground, hissing in her ear. "Do not tell me what to do, kit." Her breath stank in her face, and more fear swallowed her as Ribbon stood back up and padded past the cats. She sniffed when they reached a sewer, and spotted a large gap in between bars of metal. Rose closed her eyes tight as Ribbon leaped through, landing on solid but wet ground. Ribbon trudged through the sewer water until she clambered out onto pavement leading

down until she couldn't see anymore. Rose noticed a nest against the wall, and the heads of two other kits pop out from inside. Ribbon put Rose down. "This is your home until you are old enough," She said, but more softer than in the clearing. "Get in the nest."

Rose silently climbed into the nest, coming face to face with two kits with black pelts. One had yellow eyes, and one had green. "This is Ghost and Abyss," Said Ribbon. First she touched the yellowed eyed kit, and then the green eyed kit. "What is your name?" Ribbon said, noticing how she spoke harsher to her than the other two. "Rose," She murmured, noticing how different she was than Ghost and Abyss. Rose's pelt was light brown, with her tabby striped a darker shade of brown. "Your first lesson," smirked Ribbon, "Is swimming. Get in the water."

Rose's ears flattened as she padded to the edge of the pavement. She gazed down at the sticky, churning water with protest, shivering at the thought of getting in.

"Move!" yowled Ribbon, and she shoved her in.

With a gasp, she flew towards the river, squeezing her eyes tight as the tip of her ears started going under.

Chapter 4

Rose plunged into the substance, hearing a sucking noise as she dissapeared, head going under. She didn't know which way was up--so she raised her chin and felt herself slowly moving in one direction. But it was too slow. She would drown before she had lifted. So she kicked, and desperately tried to move upwards. Unfortunately she didn't know how to swim. *You need air! Now!* Rose fought to urge to open her mouth and bring something in, but she knew it would just kill her faster. Was that Ribbon's plan? To kill her? Her lungs screamed for air, and her head fogged. *No!* Rose struggled up, reaching out and paddling upwards. She heard voiced. Gasping, the substance yet again made a gurgling and sucking noise as her head broke the surface. Weak with exhaustion, she clambered up the side of the pavement, putting in much effort to that, and fell over. The last thing she saw was Ribbon's paws before she blacked out.

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Rose warily lifted her head. Her muscles were still worn out, but she found herself in the nest. Ghost, Abyss, and Ribbon weren't in it though, but when she peered out, she spotted the two kits beside the sewer water. Abyss nudged Ghost with a claw, smirking. "You couldn't beat me if you tried!" She hissed.

Ghost snarled and launched herself at Abyss, and Abyss intersected the attack by jumping forward, sending Ghost sprawling back. Ghost shook out her fur and jumped back, and the two kits tusseled, dangerously close to the edge of the water. There was a screech as she saw Abyss's claws slash down her side. Yowling in rage, Ghost bit down on Abyss's ear. She jolted in pain, and she broke off from their clump of claws and staggered, falling down into the sewer water. Rose screeched in terror and leaped out to rush to the rescue.

At the very last second she saw a paw flash out, hooking onto Ghost and pulling her under with. Eyes widening in surprise, she stood at the edge, fur bristling. She saw two heads break surface a few seconds later, and she saw them hiss at each other and launch forward, to meet with teeth and claws. Her jaws gaped open in shock. They were *fighting* even though they were in that horrible water? She saw Ghost spring from the surface to push Abyss down, both of them dissapearing, before she saw Abyss tugging her out with her self, landing a massive blow to the side of Ghost's head before turning to see Rose. The frightening liquid was still plastered against her pelt, and she shook it off before speaking. "Impressed?" She licked her paw, nose wrinkling at the foul taste.

"So, you think you can be in Bloodclan?" Rose heard a voice to her side, and turned around to see Ghost.

"I'm back, darlings," a louder voice echoed as she saw a shadowy figure come closer, until she recognized Ribbon. Her gaze was only looking at Abyss and Ghost. "The meeting wasn't anything important," she informed her kits. Turning to gaze at Rose, she said, "Are you ready?"

Chapter 5

Rose gazed up at Ribbon. "Ready for what?" Confusion swept her to other thoughts, about what she possibly could by saying, then remembered Scourge and froze. Most Bloodclan cats only saw Scourge when he called a meeting, otherwise they all stayed in their dens, not talking to others. Was she going to take her to Scourge?

Ribbon smirked and shoved Abyss forward. Abyss looked up at Ribbon, but with no expression in her blank eyes. "To fight Abyss." Ribbon flicked her tail. Rose stiffened, eyes widening as she met Abyss's gaze, and a smile slowly crept upon Abyss's dark face.

"I expect you self-taught yourself from the time you had that swimming lesson," Ribbon continued. "So it is time you actually fought. Abyss, show her."

Abyss smiled. "My pleasure," she responded, leaping with a short hiss. She bowled into Rose and rapidly sank her teeth into her arm and pulled some flesh, moving her head back quickly and started to press Rose down. Rose struggled to try to raise herself from the ground, feeling the strength in Abyss's muscles. She gasped as thorn-sharp claws claws dug into her back, and without thinking Rose sank her pointy teeth into Abyss's pads. Abyss yanked her paw away, and Rose took that moment to throw her off. Abyss whirled around quickly, slashing out her claws and scoring her down the side of her face. Rose ducked her head, eyes huge with pain, and when her head was out of the way she felt a stinging on the tip of her ear as a claw punctured through the flesh. Rose dashed forward and twisted her claws into Abyss's flank, pushing her backwards, when she heard a rough call from the sewer drain that was the enter and exit of Ribbon's den. "Meeting. Come at once." Rose stopped fighting, and Ribbon flicked her tail. "You all sta-"

"Scourge wants the kits to come." Rose spotted the gleaming eyes of Bone at the small entrance, before he whipped around and padded

off.

Ribbon turned back to the three. "Come. Now." She nudged them in front of her. Rose twitched her tail in excitement. This was the first time she was going to be out in the open since quite a long time. Ribbon turned around. "If you can jump this, you can come to the meeting. If not stay down there and do not move," She added coldly. "Understood?"

"Yes, Ribbon," The kits nodded. Ribbon turned and leaped up the sewer drain, moving past the metal bars and escaping outside. Ghost leaped, and emerged outside. Abyss leaped, claws clanging against the metal but hissed. When she landed back on where she started, distress showed in the stance of her ears. Growling, she tried again and leaped up, vanishing outside. Rose bunched her muscles. Her turn! Finally! Launching up, she smacked into the wall next to the sewer exit. She landed on all fours back on the sewer pavement, shaking out her fur. Trying again, she sprang, but got nowhere near it. Her fur bristled in determination. By now she was panting, but she leaped, swiping at the air but not connecting with the exit. She heard mumbling around the three cats by the exit, Abyss, Ghost and Ribbon, before they turned around and left her. "What? No!" She yowled, and defeat crashed over her heart. She let out an inward wail. Suddenly the stench of the sewer seemed fouler than ever. She looked up and saw clouds and a clear sky, and the soft dancing of leaves and nice, brown, clean branches. Her heart ached, more than ever wanting to get there. She slumped down, letting out a heatbroken moan as she remembered again about all her times outside with Feather-- And now she was dead, and trapped in this horrid cage.

Chapter 6

Rose gazed up at the exit. She *was* going to do this, she would not let Bloodclan rule where she would stay. She mustered the rest of her strength and leaped, missing, but then let out a yowl of rage, wrapping her paws around the metal and dangling there. She let in a short breath. This was her chance. Rose lifted her hind legs, gasping in effort, as she backed out of the metal bars and collapsed outside. She gasped, inhaling, and realized it was much easier to breathe out here. Rose closed her eyes, as there were the tweets of the birds, rustling of leaves, and wind in her fur. She lifted herself up, muscles trembling, and bounded out towards the dumpster.

When she got there, Scourge was in the middle of his speech. He spotted her and snarled. "So you think cats can just come to my speech late? My words are not to be wasted!" He spat an order to Bone, and he leaped down and raked her ears, sending fur flying and blood flowing. Rose hissed in pain, taking a step back. "You need to learn!" Bone snarled and turned to join Scourge back on top of the large twoleg dumpster. Rose bowed her head, paws shaking in terror, as she went to join Ribbon and the other two. Ghost was gazing at her, unblinking, before turning to stare back up at Scourge. Scourge gazed upon his clan again cooly before continuing, "There are a couple of rogues strolling around our twolegplace acting as if it's theirs." Scourge narrowed his eyes. "It's time we taught them a lesson. Bloodclan rules this twolegplace, and it always will. Meet me here in the morning, today we need to look for their camp area. The cats are already chosen. Bone, Wyvern, Rock, Fang, Eclipse, and Leaf. Go at once." Scourge turned and vanished behind the dumpster. The cats assigned for patrol looked around with unfriendly expressions. They all gathered at the edge of the alley. The rest of the cats gazed around, before turning to retreat to their personal things and their den.

Ribbon stared at Rose as they walked back to the sewer. "You made it out," she commented gruffly. Rose stood straighter. "Of course I

did."
Ribbon snorted.

When the cats reached the sewer, Rose stood back, hesitant to go back to that place. Ribbon glared at Rose. "Scared?" She asked when the other two kits leaped in. Rose snarled. "No!" she turned and jumped down, landing on all fours, but the impact stung her paws. Looking up she saw the two kits vanishing into the shadows, and Rose bounded after, and soon later she heard pawsteps of Ribbon following. Rose sat in the nest quietly as Abyss and Ghost curled up together and fell asleep. She looked at the two, realizing that she couldn't tell if it was one cat or two. Ribbon turned the corner and watched Rose. "Rose," She grunted. "Come here."

Rose nodded slowly and came out of the nest, padding up to Ribbon. Ribbon looked down at her. She stood thinking for a bit. Finally she nodded. "Okay. You can return to the nest."

Confused, Rose turned around and padded off to join Abyss and Ghost.

Chapter 7

Rose gazed at Abyss and Ghost in confusion as they sat outside the nest, sitting straight, chest puffed out. Their pelts were glossy and smooth, the first time she had ever seen a Bloodclan cat looking clean. Rose sat up and licked her paw, drawing it over her ear, before putting it down and speaking. "What's with you guys?" Rose leaped out of the nest and faced the sisters.

Ghost stared at her irritably. "Have you no sense? We're getting our collars today, since we didn't receive them from twolegs. We weren't kittypets before, so we didn't get collars."

Abyss gave an excited mew. "Collars mean that we aren't kits anymore!"

Rose gazed at the two. "Congratulations!" Rose meowed, but couldn't feel excited for them. Rose was glad to not have something hanging on her neck.

"You're not trying to act like you aren't getting one too, right?" Ghost prodded her with a sharp, quick paw, "Of course you'll have one too."

Rose blinked. *Why her?* "But Scourge doesn't trust me," she meowed, only to be responded by a snort coming from Abyss.

"It's either he does or he doesn't care, or whatever the rules are, here in Bloodclan." Abyss sniffed at her as if it was obvious and turned her head away. "You should be proud that you're getting one, anyway."

Rose stood in silence, before realizing dumbly that it *was* an honor. She would be a true Bloodclan cat now! Rose smiled, sitting down and giving herself a quick grooming before sitting down straight beside Ghost.

At almost the same second walked in Ribbon. With a hiss, she stuck

out her neck to not be hit by long, sharp dog and cat teeth. Rose realized the collar was green, and watched as she got close to the three cats. "Hold still," Ribbon mumbled around the collar, as her eyes shined with pride.

Ribbon approached Abyss, and Abyss held her breath as Ribbon stuffed it down her head. Rose could tell she was trying hard to hold in her pain, and stiffened as it went through and loosened a little when it reached her neck. Eyes wide, fluffing out her fur, she shook out her pelt. Not long after she stood in a pained expression, her eyes sparkled in joy, and showed off her collar to Ribbon, Rose, and Ghost.

The same reaction came from Ghost, who received a gray collar, until finally it was Rose's turn.

She heard a thump as Ribbon landed in the sewer, and echoing foot steps as she padded down the path next to the sticky water. She gazed at Ribbon as she approached her with a pink collar. Ribbon nodded. "You've come a long way from a mewling weakling," she commented. Rose nodded, but with a bit of irritation.

Ribbon pulled the collar over her head and Rose gasped and shut her eyes tight as the tight collar pulled across her face. The spikes and sharp edges from the base of the teeth cut through her skin and she felt herself start to bleed. Finally with a long sigh, the collar slipped over her head and settled on her neck. With a small bounce of triumph, she gazed at Abyss and Ghost, and they looked back at her with the same excited gaze.

Chapter 8

Rose looked up sleepily from her spot in the nest when a loud, harsh voice snarled in the distance. "Clan meeting *now!* It is important not to be late." Rose jumped out, following Abyss and Ghost, being led by Ribbon. The four all jumped up the sewer cleanly, and padded in a neat line behind Ribbon. Her tail flicked in satisfaction when Scourge watched them, and she thought she saw a hint of praise in his eyes. She saw a flick of an ear from Ribbon, too. Their lessons to look organized had paid off, and she enjoyed looking important.

They sat together towards the back, and Rose lifted her head to gaze st Scourge. He looked around with his icy gaze. "Rogues once again have invaded our territory," he snarled, his claws raking against the old plastic, making a shrill noise like claws on a chalkboard. "I want strictly ten cats, no more or less, to go fight. Ghost, Abyss, Rose, Cracked Brick, Bone, Wyvern, Leaf, Jynx, Pine, and Me," Scourge growled, eying the cats with challenge, before continuing. "The rest of you stay out here and make sure they don't try to take the camp. You know the drill. If you don't kill something, you failed."

Rose stood as Bone hissed to the patrol to gather. She stood, followed by Ghost, but not Abyss who whirled ahead, claws slid out as far as they would go, eyes focused ahead. She padded straight past some of the higher ranked cats to stand beside Leaf, that turned her head and narrowed her eyes at the young cat before a conversation between them started up.

Scourge paid no attention to the rest of the cats as he snarled an order and began to walk, the cats following.

They padded down the soiled alleyway, and she heard a cat hiss when they stepped in something sticky. When the rest of the patrol passed it, they gave it a disgusted glare.

A storm overheard kicked up, darkening the sky. Scourge's figure

stood straighter, by the looks of it, pleased. The patrol turned the corner, and Scourge led the way down the twoleg path, next to the silent thunderpath that was illuminates by golden light from streetlamps. The Bloodclan patrol headed quietly down the path, until they reached a twoleg fence and then a main, large twoleg bin. Rose struggled to try to scent cats over the rain, but they were definitely at a rogue's camp. Scourge whirled around and flicked his ears for Rose, Leaf, anf Jynx to go around and block the other way. She turned away while he ordered a few others to jump up the fence and some to block the main entrance of the alley. One side of it was twoleg fence, and the other, brick. Rose heard Leaf snarl out, "Now, be quiet, you two. Line up by the entrance but crouch down. Wait for Scourge's order," Leaf crouched down, scanning the alley with narrowed eyes. Heart beating, she realized she had never fought before in her life, or she had never been taught. Ribbon had mentioned some training that would be done in a couple of days, other than that, she stood, fur bristling, but knew she couldn't express fear. If the rogues scented it, Scourge would be furious. Swallowing for control, she settled down, laying her fur flat.

A cat's head emerged from a small pipe by the brick wall. She heard the cat gasp as Scourge yowled, "Bloodclan, attack! Forward, trap the rogues!"

Chapter 9

The quiet twoleg place was now alive with yowling, spitting cats. Imediately when Scourge had gave his order, the rogue had ducked her head back in quickly and then reamerged, leaping for the fence. But Bloodclan was ready. They snarled, leaning forward and extending their claws. The rogue dropped her weight so she landed on the ground. Spitting, she bristled her fur as Bloodclan closed in.

Rose's fur prickled. She had the urge to fight, to help her clanmates... but Leaf was not moving. Confused, she lay where she was. Raising her gaze, she watched Scourge come forward. "You have invaded our territory," he meowed smoothly, eyes calmly starting into her, although his claws were slid out in hostility. The rogue she-cat stopped. She lifted her head and opened her jaws, inhaling air, but through the air, she was scenting. "Maybe so," Rose was surprised to hear her speak. She had a quiet, but confident tone. "But that won't mean you'll beat me."

Scourge twitched his tail. "You're outnumbered."

"Ha, ha. I have friends."

Behind her, Rose heard yowls of rage, and she quickly whirled around to intercept the new cats who were running into the area. She hissed, clawing at any fur that she didn't recognize from Bloodclan. A cat squealed when she hooked a tongue forward, and it jerked away to leave a nasty hole. It turned tail and fled, wailing. A cat crashed into her from behind. She whipped around, but the cat had already sent her to the ground with a strong blow, and it raked it's claws down her nose. She yowled as blood started to flow, and her opponent had leaped onto her, pinning her down with razor sharp claws. But suddenly the weight vanished.
"Get off of her!" A yowl sounded close to her ear, and she recognized it as Leaf. Battered, Rose stumbled to her paws and saw Leaf tearing into his throat viciously, then watch him coldly as he turned limp in her grasp. Flinging him away, she met Rose's gaze with a quick nod, then leap onto another enemy, who was already

wounded. Looking around quickly, she noticed the she-cat they had first encountered with a brown tabby tom, hauling an old, elder cat out of their sheltee. They hurried onward. Confidence blasted through her paws, and she roared, leaping onward. Cracked Brick took place beside her, matching her sprint. *He must have the same idea.* Finally they crashed down the slope, attacking viciously. Cracked Brick took on the she-cat skillfully, while Rose hissed and kicked out, grabbing onto and pulling fur she could get. Without experience, she was hissing and doing whatever she could to stop the tom from causing her pain. Suddenly Ghost had appeared from behind them and was leaping past both Rose and Cracked Brick. With an enfuriates howl, she bore down on she she-cat. "I know you!" She screeched in rage and madness. You killed Deathberry!" With an angry sob, she darted into attack range, but slipped last minute under sharp claws. Blood licked the tips of the she-cat's claws, and time seemed to slow as Ghost wailed in agony.

"No! Ghost!"

Chapter 10

Rose snarled, pulling back the corners of bloody lips to reveal glowing, sharp teeth. Crouching, she sprang forward and slashed her claws down the side of the she-cat's muzzle, draining the liquid from her eye as she ran the blow deep.
The she-cat shrieked in agony, thrashing her head about, unhooking Rose's shaking claws. Gasping, she backed away, flicking droplets of blood from her other, good eye. "When i'm through with you, nobody will know you were ever a cat before!" She howled and launched forward. Fear twisted up Rose's body. She jumped away just in time, but was yanked to the side when she felt cutting talons grip her tail. The rogue jumped off the cement and landed on her neck, digging her claws into Rose's stomach and ripping them out rapidly, driven by pain. Rose wrenched away and spun on her heals, and suddenly she was using the move she saw Abyss use on her first day in her new clan. She leaped, crashing into the infurated rogue, headfirst, sending her recoiling in midair, thumping into the side of a building.
Rose yowled angrily after her. "You killed her! You killed Ghost!"
The head of Abyss spun around as she heard these words. "No!"
In a flash the black young cat was on the rogue, ripping the flesh in her neck as if it was prey. "Both my sisters!" She raged. "Are you mad?"
The rogue heaved her chest, struggling under Abyss's weight. Finally she rasped out, "No. I am...I'm not mad." The next part was such a quiet whisper, Rose strained to hear. "You and your whole clan are."
Abyss screeched and dealt a final, killing blow. The rogue gasped, falling back. Abyss sank to the ground, moaning. "Why Ghost?"
After those words, such hatred burned in her eyes. Rose wondered how a cat so young could feel those emotions.
Rose was about to come to comfort her, when Scourge's yowl g.athered all cats. "Bloodclan! Come!"
Rose glanced around. Suddenly she realized she couldn't find the rogue cats. *Did we win?* She wondered, padding over to the cats of her clan.

Scourge scanned the cats approvingly. "Good. Now, follow me." He turned around and padded off down the way they had first come. Now, no monsters were roaring down the dark paths. They slunk down well-cared for twoleg fences until they found their alley. Scourge slipped through the tight tunnel through the wall, emerging to the clearing of concrete.
Rose had always wondered how the tunnel was made, and realized water or rats must have done something. Also, twolegs must have forgotten about the clearing, because there were no signs of twolegs or them being there anywhere. Twolegs were quite clumsy with covering up their tracks.

Rose wearily trudged across the pavement, suddenly realizing the pain the she-cat inflicted. Imagining her warm nest in the sewer, she picked up the pace, heading towards the sewer.
"Bloodclan, gather around your leader!" Yowled Bone's commanding voice.
Rose sighed, turning around to listen.

Chapter 11

Before Rose did anything, she was instantly taken back to the thought of the murdered Ghost, and the despaired Abyss. A crash of pity was sent down on Rose's shoulders as she remembered Abyss's reaction. Finding her, she padded over, but didn't say anything, knowing Scourge would personally rip out both her ears if she was talking after such an important event.

Abyss looked up sadly, but it quickly changed to defiance as she continued to glare at Rose in the eyes. Rose knew better, and looked away, not wanting to upset her any more. They sat down around many cats, unable to find Ribbon quick enough to get to her before anyone was seated. How would the mother react to knowing about her dead kit?

"The rogues were either killed or chased far away. They won't bother us." Scourge had said loudly from the top of his dumpster. "Our territory is now again clear of other cats. Bloodclan did a formidable job today. I expect to continue to see such effort. We left the rogue's camp in pools of blood and bodies. This is the mark of our kind." He said his words slowly so they could absorb them, then left with a strange, and different glint in his eye. "All of you get to your dens."

Rose quickly looked at Abyss to be able to say something before her adoptive sister got irritated. "I'm so sorry about Ghost. I knew you two were very close, and I admired your relationship with her. Hopefully things can get better from here." Rose said this quietly so no other cat could hear. "Though... Scourge doesn't look like he cares very much if his own clan's cats die off, does he?"

Abyss looked solemn from the first part, but then at the last, her face hardened. "Sure he cares. He just doesn't want to look weak in front of everyone else." She flicked her tail and walked off towards her nest. Rose wasn't so sure about that, but reluctantly followed anyway.

Soon enough, Ribbon had found them. She didn't say anything, just looked ahead with no emotion. Once in the nest, she nuzzled Abyss sorrowfully. "I'm sorry. I feel how you do." Then she lay down and began to lick Abyss's head, who seemed to find calmness after the cutting reality of just before. Rose sat in the other half of the nest, wanting nothing more but to go to sleep. But before that, she just couldn't help wondering one thing.

"Hey, Abyss... You said something about a 'Deathberry' during the battle. You called her your sister. Who is she?"

Suddenly Abyss froze, a pained look in her eyes too easily seen. Ribbon instantly pierced a sharp glare through Rose. "How dare you?"

Chapter 12

Rose got out of the nest, ears flattened from the day before. Ribbon did not hesitate with her words, and Rose could definitely say she got the message.

It was Rose's turn to hunt for them. Usually Ghost volunteered, but now they all took turns when they had time to hunt. It was crazy with prey, the best spot was usually taken by a cat, or protected almost all the time. Other places, prey was scared off due to monsters. Ribbon had spent some time making sure they were more than good at hunting a while back, and for the next few days her muscles still hurt from the exercise.

Now she was passing the mouse nest, which a cat was, (no surprise to Rose,) guarding it. His eyes gleamed menacingly, glaring at Rose as if he was about to leap, claws outstretched, only to rake them down her face and throat. She didn't pay attention to him, just kept walking.

By sunhigh, the only things she had caught were a bird a few chipmunks in a faraway twoleg park. It was risky going there, so she didn't spend long. She was grateful to even have caught this much, as it was hard to get by with all this noise the monsters were making. Now her challenge was getting back without being ambushed, or having her prey stolen. Ribbon almost never had this problem, she looked frightening enough for most of the clan, but for Rose this was a problem. Scenting more cats, she instantly leaped back to retrace herself in the other path. Her combat was still under a learning process. She was finding it pretty hard to be able to attack without flinching, or slipping if she decided to rear up on her hind paws. This was entirely different for Abyss, who could hurt someone by sneezing into some moss. Sighing, she padded back quickly, not wanting any more trouble.

Indeed she had found her lucky day, because she got back to the sewer in one piece, and with prey. She dropped the bird to Ribbon, and gave Abyss a chipmunk, herself another. "This is all you

caught?" Ribbon sounded unimpressed.

"Sorry," Rose ducked her head. "Most cats were ready to fight for their lives to protect the good spots."

Abyss was watching her with a rather inspecting gaze, but then eventually she began eating her portion. It was mostly silent, except for the usual echoes that passed or sometimes struck the air. Ribbon stood up and nosed the bones and some uneatable into the sewer water. She stretched, then stood up. "Okay. Ready to take a little trip to the pond?" Ribbon was talking about a backyard pond that a twoleg owned. They got their water from there.

Rose stood, shaking out her paws, and Abyss stepped out of the nest when suddenly a very strong scent of other cat hit her nose. Ribbon also scented this, because instantly her ears perked up. A monstrous hiss slowly escaped her lips, and she gazed coldly at the shadows behind the metal, cracked walls.

Rose didn't see anything there, but knew that Ribbon was right. There were cats there. Two of them.

Abyss snarled, stepping up beside her mother. "They're going to try to take the sewers away from us."

Ribbon's gaze hardened, as a slight movement began to stir in the blackness of this never-ending labyrinth. Then there was a major leap, and the other cat behind it screeched in battle-rage.

Rose snarled loudly as one struck for Ribbon. She was not going to let anyone hurt her family. She had never seen Ribbon fight, she only knew she was light on her feet. Abyss immediately jumped for her mother's attacker, but suddenly Ribbon sidestepped, her foot flashing out, tripping this apparently experienced fighter to the ground. With a movement that she barely caught as she blinked her eye, Ribbon was over him, pupils shrinking, a horrid grin slowly expanding on her face. "I hope you truly loved your life before this moment," she said, baring thorn-sharp, gleaming teeth.

The tom snarled under her and flashed a paw at her chest to rake a deep blow, but Ribbon was faster. She leaped out from on top of

him, then bowled into his side, sending him flying over the edge of the metal into the waters. She then leaped in after him.

She suddenly felt her vision blurring with a sharp haze, and she was falling to the ground. Before she touched it, a searing pain stung her face, and she yelped as the impact of the ground finally hit her side.

Chapter 13

With a screech of terror, Rose felt pain rip through her soft fur, tearing unmerciful, strong-willed claws through her flesh. A cat had bowled into her, and had clawed it's way over her as she fell. Aching pain blasted through her cheek and made the closest eye close, and fur flew and blood dripped from wounds in her side and chest. With a hurling weight, a cat was over her, flattening Rose to the cold, icky metal. More teeth cutting into her ear. This cat would not stop.

Rose collected herself despite the roaring in her ears, and kicked her strong hind legs. She connected with her foe's own leg, and with a hiss, he tripped, slipping for a moment. Before he had time to straighten himself, she slipped away and quickly turned, bouncing off her momentum to hurl herself at the tom. She let her claws extend as the tom reared up to intercept it, but as he came down to pin her again, she let herself cling onto his head for a moment, feeling the sickly liquid of an eye pour onto her paw. A yowl rose louder than the battling cats, and her attacker crumbled to the ground, moaning in agony.

Now Rose noticed that this was a young cat, perhaps around as old as she. Drawing up breath, she let out the most threatening screech she could manage, fluffing up her spiky, unkempt fur to warn the male cat away. Her lips were peeled back in a snarl, revealing a line of piercing sharp teeth. But no, this enemy was not backing down. Fury came off in waves from her opponent, and suddenly he launched himself at her, howling continuously with his retaliating blows. His paw smacked her head and the world waved as her brain grew dizzy. Staggering up, she attempted to fight back most her consciousness, but didn't succeed as more searing wounds opened in her pelt. In an instant, a flash of bright fur against the environment of the sewers flashed in front of her, and no new numbing cuts scarred her. Ribbon had come, and within not many more moments she tossed the limp tom away and whipped around to gaze at Rose. "Get up!" She snarled, eyes wild.

It was as if the words had jolted her eyes into obedience, because the world shifted back into place. Abyss had the final she-cat against the wall, and she was spitting as she lashed her claws continuously at her throat. Finally there was a drowning, gurgling noise and the cat slid down from her agony, bubbles forming on the blood at her throat. Abyss curled her claws against the floor, scanning the area only to gaze at Ribbon and Rose, standing almost side by side.

Rose's adoptive sister made her way over. "I can't believe they even attempted that," She snorted, but she saw reeling claw marks which were swirled dangerously close to Abyss's eyes. The patterns looked like she had realized someone was trying to blind her, and had kept dodging and moving her head so it wouldn't happen. Her sides were heaving, but she gave her chest a disdainful lick.

Ribbon looked pretty ticked off, Rose noted to herself. Her eyes were narrowed and the tip of her tail was flicking slowly. "We might have more ambushes like that coming our way. We never know," She grunted, turning her head towards Rose. "You're doing well. You're learning with your eyes, watching battles. Perhaps you will be trained like the typical Bloodclan cat." Ribbon nodded again before looking up to the faraway sewer entrance. "We can finally go. But before that, we need to make sure nobody else is down here."

Chapter 14

The trio emerged, one after another, through the metal bars. They made their way past the overgrown hedges beside a mistreated brick building, and around the corner. The way to the clearing, from their den.

The clearing looked like it might have been a very smooth parking lot, shared by all the tall building around it. There were two alleyways, one blocked off with a gate, and one open to come and go freely. However, this part of the city was old, and no twolegs were interested in coming near. It'd better stay that way.

The clearing was deserted. Only one cat was lingering in the shadows by a fence close to the alleyway, which was far across from them. It paused in it's strides to glance up at them with glittering eyes, before leaping up the wooden posts and vanishing on the other side. Another Bloodclanner.

Ribbon signaled to them with a flick of her ear to follow, and they trotted across around the building through a small space with more overgrown trees and shrubs closing in on them. Leaping free, they trotted down a sidewalk, close to the grass and buildings, monsters whizzing past them on the Thunderpath. They finally reached the part of the city with houses, and they slipped past an oblivious twoleg kit who was playing in the yard. Behind the house they quickly ran over to the pond and lapped up the fresh, cold water. Rose, after a while of drinking, looked up, licking the droplets from her whiskers to see her companions doing the same. Abyss looked at her and nodded, backing up to then turn to trot after Ribbon, who was already going the way back.

They stopped short in the clearing, eyes wide. Bloodclan cats were everywhere, swarming the cement. They all were either furious, scared, or worried. Leaf began to trot past, claws unsheathed, fur bristling, until Rose meowed loudly to draw her attention. "Leaf.

What happened?"

Leaf turned, eyes shining in rage. "Bone came back to camp with fresh wounds saying that Scourge has been badly injured by a group of kittypets who tried to challenge them for food. They were starving." Leaf snorted. "Too bad their collars scare their prey off."

"Badly injured?" Ribbon spat. "How badly?"

"He's barely breathing. Bone managed to fight them off."

"Bone." Ribbon narrowed her eyes. "We all know he's too old to be here."

Leaf's eyes widened but didn't say a word, before she then nodded. "I agree." Then she turned to the cats still pooling the area. "They're all saying Scourge will die. That would mean Bone would lead us."

Abyss spoke up. "Bone can't lead! He's confident only as a second in command!"

Rose opened her jaws to also give word, but she was cut off by a loud snarl of silence.

The clearing instantly went quiet.

Bone had leaped up onto the dumpster bin, eyes dark. He then recited just what the cats had predicted.

"Scourge has died to a major wound in his neck."

Screeches of fear and protest rose in the clearing.

"We have no leader!"

"What will happen to us?"

"We'll all die!"

"SHUT UP!" Bone howled into the sky.

Everyone turned back to him, quieted.

"Scourge is dead, but that is because he was too weak to survive." There was a long pause in Bone's words, as in challenging anyone to object. Nobody spoke up, but Rose's adoptive sister bristled beside her. "Scourge was courageous," Abyss muttered under her breath.

"We're strong. We don't need him. You have me! I'm a way better leader than him, and I will bring you all the recognition you deserve!"

Most cats yowled agreement, but a small portion kept quiet. Leaf, who had been loyal to Scourge until the end, turned to the three she was sitting with. "Scourge was not weak. He led very well. He made Bloodclan feared."

"I will make Bloodclan the kings of the city, known by more than just local cats!"

Suddenly a dark figure leaped from beside her. Abyss was leaping past cats, fur spiked. This quieted Leaf, and sparked interest in Ribbon's eyes. "Well, there goes my little fighter."

Rose said nothing, just watched.

By now all cats had turned their attention towards Abyss. Bone had cut off his speech to look angrily at this young cat.

Abyss sprang up to the dumpster bin, easily the size of this tom. There was always something powerful in this cat that Rose envied.

"Rubbish!" Abyss spat, hurling a blow at his cheek, hooking her claws into his flesh and sinking her teeth into his ear.

Bone was not expecting this, and was paralyzed in alarm. At the blow, he yelped, rolling over to his back and kicking his hind legs at her stomach.

No, this cat was trained by the one and only Ribbon. Abyss's mentor was on her paws now, watching intently, yowling support. "Show the old cat!

The dark cat dodged the kick. Abyss swung another paw to tear through his flank, making her way to retaliate the same way Bone

had tried. Bone snarled as the hit connected with his belly.

Something was not right. Abyss shouldn't be winning this easily. Bone had hardly made a scratch, and his opponent had drained the breath from him and seared his pelt with wounds.

Cats begun to realize this and bristled. A cat yowled from the back, "This second leader is a joke! What was Scourge thinking? He can't fight!"

Rose's eyes widened. She had never actually seen Bone in a real battle. He was respected to due rank, but was he actually a soft kit on the inside?

Scourge and Bone were always close. Maybe Scourge was trying to protect him.

Rose made a note to further investigate that situation later.

Abyss had sank her teeth into Bone's neck, pinning him down.

Bone jerked violently, then fell still. Abyss kicked him from the dumpster, and cats shuffled away to avoid the flying body.

"Bloodclan! You have a new leader!"

Chapter 15

Half of the clan was speechless at first, and the other was roaring with what Rose didn't know. Confusion, relief, all good answers. Ribbon began yowling her support, eyes shining in pride. Leaf twitched her tail, watching the middle-aged cat stand tall on the dumpter bin, her throne.
"Welcome to the new era of Bloodclan's life. The sudden tragic death of Scourge left us to be paused, but we will move on courageously and not let him down." Abyss's eyes gleamed, scanning the cats below.
"Isn't it time to assign a new deputy, then?" Rock called out. Rose remembered him from the rogue patrol. She hadn't heard him speak up before.
Abyss threw a cold glance in his direction. "Do you think the rules have changed, even with Scourge gone?" She hissed. She threw herself down onto him and scored his ears with her claws. He snarled quietly, flattening his ears, but Abyss was already making her way back up the garbage bin.
Every cat watched her jump up, as if wondering the same thing Rock had asked. "I do have a deputy in mind, however."
Rose instinctively looked at Ribbon. Why wouldn't Abyss choose Ribbon? And if Ghost was alive, there was the chance Abyss would choose Ghost as well. The thought of Ghost reminded her about Deathberry, and the questions to follow. Who was she? Rose still didn't know, and honestly, the curiosity was killing her.
"The new deputy of Bloodclan will be announced tomorrow morning. Wyvern and Rabbit, guard the entrances and exits. Everyone else, get to your nests."
Everyone began to disperse, but Ribbon stood up and waited, so Rose waited with her.
When there were but a few cats in the clearing, Abyss leaped down and trotted towards her mother and adoptive sister. "Aren't you proud of me?" Abyss purred out.
Ribbon brushed her head against her daughter's cheek and raised her tail, purring in affection. "Of course, darling. You did splendid."
"Good job, Abyss," Rose meowed. Abyss looked up and dipped her

head. "Of course." Then she twitched her tail. "But don't think that means i'm going to treat you different than the others if you lack discipline!"
Rose nodded slowly, twitching her whiskers. "Well, I wish you good luck in your leadership."
"Thank you, Rose."
Ribbon gazed, a bit sorrowfully, at her kit. "That means you'll sleep near the garbage bin now."
Abyss nodded. "I better get going, then. Bye." Then she touched noses with Ribbon and turned, walking in the direction to her new den.
"Let's go, Rose."

Chapter 16

How had the numbers decreased so quickly? From four to just two. Although the family was small to begin with, Rose was used to the group how it was. And now that Ghost was dead and Abyss had risen from a young clan cat to leader, it left her with just Ribbon. Rose remembered when Ribbon and her first 'met' in the clearing. She had slammed her down onto the ground, although Rose couldn't exactly remember why. When she thought harder, the memories of Feather slipped to the front of Rose's head and she stiffened. *Bloodclan killed my mama!* The thought that had ran through her head that seemed like so long ago danced furiously, and suddenly so much pain hit her chest that she thought that a monster had hit her. Her vision blackened and she fell stiffy to the ground, into the dust. Ribbon jumped in alarm and whirled around. "Rose? Rose! What's going on?" She sniffed Rose's head with a mixture of worry and confusion. "Did something happen?"
An owl landed in the tree above them.
Rose moaned in agony. Ribbon continued nudging her head, eyes glittering anxiously. "Get to your paws, kit!"
Rose's vision focused back and she looked at Ribbon weakly. "Ribbon?"
"What is it, kit?"
"....Do-" Rose's voice hitched in her throat, and she thought she wouldn't be able to continue until she opened her mouth again. "Do you remember Feather?" Her voice wavered.
Ribbon sat down next to Rose. "This isn't a good place to talk..." she murmured before answering, "No, I don't."
Rose stared off. The nighttime breeze waved the leaves of shrubs near the tall red brick building. "My mother? She came here with me at first.
Ribbon realized and nodded. "Yes, I remember. Are you thinking about her?" She paused reluctantly and gave Rose a comforting lick on the ear.
"Why was she killed?" Rose asked, her heart drowned.
"She would have slowed Bloodclan down, or just taken advantage of it. Have you not thought of that? She came clearly because she was

starving. Perhaps your twolegs didn't feed you two properly. Maybe she came for food."
Rose looked up defensively. "We didn't have twolegs!"
"Oh, please," Ribbon muttered. "Feather was afraid, and she wouldn't stop being afraid and just betray us in battle, do you not understand? Kittypet blood!"
"Then why wasn't I killed?"
"You were a kit. You could be trained. And look! You have been trained. And besides, aren't you happy in Bloodclan?"
"Yes, but.."
"Then why are you complaining, you ignorant brat? We've trained you, provided you with food, and a home! You love it here, do you not?"
Rose stung with the insult. "I do love it."
Ribbon's voice grew softer. "I care about you, and you have a place here. Understand that Feather was afraidand desperate, nothing like the powerful warrior you are now. You're much better than her, and you hardly knew her. And, she didn't keep you satisfied, apparently, if you were just as hungry."
Rose let Ribbon's words run through her head. Maybe Ribbon was right. Rose liked it here, she fit in, and she was hungry and unhappy with her mother. Rose then thought back to the rogue battle. She was so proud of herself for the protection and loyalty she proved to her clan.
Calmed down, Rose pushed herself to her paws. "Thank you, Ribbon. I appreciate it, and.. you're right."
Ribbon purred. "Of course. Let's get you your nest then, shall we?"
Rose nodded, spirits back up as she trotted after her adoptive mother. Rose was just tired. Everything was going to be fine.

The next morning Rose awoke, extremely tired. Her paws felt like boulders, and when she sat up, she stretched a deep stretch. Ribbon was grooming herself in the other nest. "You know, I understand how it feels."
Rose looked at her strangely, confused on what Ribbon was talking about.
"To lose kin." Her eyes darkened.
"Ghost and Deathberry?" Rose asked quietly.
Ribbon looked down into the sewer. "They were such wonderful kits," Ribbon whispered, her eyes clouding with pain.

Rose touched her tail to Ribbon's shoulder sympathetically. "Umm.. if you don't mind.." Rose stammered, "Could you please tell me about Deathberry?"
Ribbon stared off, but began mildly trembling. "What a sweet kit. Friend to the friendly, victorious enemy to those who harmed her and her loved ones. She really--" Ribbon's voice stopped, and she swallowed. "I'm sorry, I don't think I can talk about this right now."
Rose had never seen Ribbon this sad, and she felt really bad about it. "Could you maybe tell me how she died?"
"The rogue!" Ribbon shrieked, tail lashing in distress. "The filthy, foxhearted rouge!"
There was silence for a while as Rose licked Ribbon's ears in comfort. Rose genuinely didn't want to see Ribbon this sad, so she didn't want her to continue, either. But, thankfully, a familiar voice echoed down the sewer. Abyss at the mouth of the barred sewer entrance. "Meeting!" She called. Then added, "Good morning Ribbon, by the way!" Then trotted off. Ribbon stood up. "Thank you, Rose, for the support, I suppose."
Rose nodded.
"Ready to go?" Ribbon shook out her fur.
"Am I ever," Rose meowed and followed Ribbon out to the clearing.

Chapter 17

"Welcome!" Abyss's yowl rang around the clearing, between the tall brick townhouses and wire mesh.

Cats from all directions were sitting around the massive dumpster, meowing a greeting to each other and talking about the weather.

As Rose followed Ribbon in, a skinny white cat with gray patches leaped past, their light blue collar flashing in front of her vision. She paused and stared after the cat as they settled next to a larger tabby tom with yellow eyes. Twitching her whiskers, she continued to follow her guardian.

"Yes, let us all get comfortable! This is no time of fear." Abyss spoke again as Rose and Ribbon found a place to sit, between Cracked Brick and Wyvern. Their eyes were focused sternly ahead at their new leader, but Wyvern from time to time had her head turned to comment to a tall black cat she had never seen before.
Rose's whiskers twitched in interest. She wanted to say hello, but she was too worried about missing what Abyss was going to say. It was still surreal to see her former den-mate grow into Bloodclan's young leader.
"I hope you all had a good night's rest," Abyss chirped charismatically. "But there is no more time for further delay. It is time to choose Bloodclan's new deputy."
Rose's fur prickled with anticipation. She had completely forgotten that a deputy was to be appointed. Glancing at Ribbon she asked, "Who do you think the deputy is going to be?"
"If you listened you would know!" Ribbon meowed in exasperation and pricked her ears to listen. Her yellow eyes were filled with warmth as she gazed at her dark-furred daughter at the head of the clan.
Rose turned back to the dumpster bin. Leaf was a popular choice. Surverying the gathered cats, she spotted the muscular she-cat, but her expression revealed nothing. Next to her sat Cracked Brick, who was shuffling his paws eagerly. Rose flicked an ear. He was also a

good choice.
"I have already asked Leaf if she would be interested in taking the position," Abyss went on. "However, she did not take it."
Leaf turned her gaze on the clan. "Being deputy is not for me," she said calmly, dipping her head. "But it was an honor to be asked." She looked back at the leader.
Abyss nodded approvingly. "So our next deputy will be Hawk!"
A ripple of confusion rose after Abyss's words. "There's no Hawk in this clan!" Called Wyvern from beside her, voice raised over the commotion.
Abyss purred and turned, beckoning with her tail behind the dumpster. "Come meet Bloodclan, Hawk."
A cat leaped up and landed neatly next to the leader. He had a tabby pelt, fur smooth and clean. He was a large cat. Rose could only assume there were muscles behind the fur.
His amber eyes scanned the clearing and for a brief moment landed on her. For some reason, a chill ran down her spine. His eyes were oddly familiar. Nervously she pushed the thought away as his eyes continued to gaze around.
"Greetings." He spoke with a quiet clarity. "I know I must be alarming you," he added when Bloodclan simply stared at him. "But you can trust my word when I say I mean no harm. I am honored to be Bloodclan's deputy," he meowed humbly.
"There is no need to fear Hawk!" Abyss raised her voice. "You all trust my judgement. He will see to today's patrols. Don't worry," Abyss purred, "He knows what to do."
At that she flicked her tail to the large tabby and jumped down with him.
Instantly meows of conversation and shock filled the clearing.
Ribbon got to her paws. "I'm going to see Leaf." Then her adoptive mother pushed through the crowd of fur and ears and disappeared.
Rose was left sitting alone. Glancing around, she decided to go talk to others. She hadn't really talked to any other Bloodclanners, and this would be the perfect opportunity.
Spotting the gray tom from earlier, Rose bounded across the clearing towards him, feeling her pink collar studded with teeth shifting as she ran. As she neared, she noticed him talking closely to another brown tom with black dapples. She halted in front of them.
"Hi!" She greeted, flicking her long-furred light brown tail. "I'm Rose."

The two broke off from their conversation and glanced up. Finally the brown tom spoke up, "Hello. I'm Rabbit. Nice to meet you." Rabbit had no collar, but he had scraggly fur and nicked ears. She guessed he hadn't the opportunity to get the accessory.
"Yes," the gray tom conceeded, looking at her through light blue eyes. "I am Cascade." Flicking his tail towards Hawk walking around organizing a patrol awkwardly, he asked, "What do you think about the new deputy?"
Rose sat down, relieved to be accepted into the chat. "It's certainly something new! I wonder where Abyss found him."
"Well, you should know." Rabbit's gaze fixed on Rose. "You were her den-mate."
"That's the kit Ribbon adopted all those moons ago?" Cascade's eyes sparked with interest. "We were just learning to hunt then."
Rose flicked her tail awkwardly. "Um, yeah. I'm Ribbon's kit."
Suddenly Hawk approached them. She glanced up at him.
"Can I get you two on border patrol?" He nodded to Cascade and Rose.
Cascade got to his paws and nodded. Rose followed, flicking her tail.
"Perfect. We're meeting over by camp entrance." Hawk hurried away.
"Bye Rabbit." Cascade mewed and turned towards camp entrance. "Come on, Rose."

Chapter 18

Rose watched as Cascade began walking over to the space where the patrol was gathering. Hesitantly she fell into step beside him and asked, "So, you and Rabbit are good friends?"
Cascade kept his eyes fixed forward, but replied, "Oh, yes. We've known each other since we were just kits. Trained together." His whiskers twitched as he reminisced his past. "Of course, he was always a better thinker than a fighter," he added. "That's probably why cats are curious about him. He always has something interesting to say."
Rose felt instantly out of place and regretful. The only cats she had really known were her denmates. *Well, at least i'm now finishing my training. Ribbon will let me explore more now.*
"Oh. Well, it's nice that you have a friend," Rose commented.
Cascade purred and shook his head. "We all have friends. Don't you?"
"Uhm, yeah," Rose said hastily. *Ribbon.*
As the pair neared the patrol, Rose had a strong urge to impress Cascade. She was just as old as him. She could make friends and be strong, too.
The patrol was made up of cats she hardly laid eyes on before. But she knew their names. A cat learns when living in a place for a while: Fawn, Red, Thorn, and Pine.
"Hello," Cascade nodded to Thorn as they neared.
The golden tom turned his head. "Cascade!" He exclaimed. "Bloodclan has had a dramatic turn of events, don't you think?"
Before Cascade had a chance to respond, Rose piped in, "Totally! I mean, our whole leading faction murdured? And a random cat we've never seen before? It's crazy."
Cascade turned his light blue eyes to Rose and nodded. "If you think about it, it's actually very like Bloodclan. Rabbit expected this kind of thing." Then Cascade glanced back at Thorn. "This is Rose, by the way."
Thorn dipped his head to Rose. He was wearing a brown collar. "A pink collar?" He asked her slowly. "That isn't very threatening, is it?"

Rose's fur slowly fluffed up defensively. She hadn't thought of that before--and it made her self conscious. "Never underestimate bright colors," Rose growled slightly.
"It's fine, Thorn," Cascade defended Rose simply. "Anyways, here comes Hawk."
As Hawk began to cross the clearing towards them, Fawn and Red broke off from their chattering. Rose gave the pair a glance: Red was a strong looking russet she-cat, while Rose could hardly believe Fawn was part of Bloodclan. She was extremely small and brown, with white flecks. Rose gave a friendly flick of her ear and turned away, as to not stare.
Hawk came forward, and his gaze fell on the group. As his eyes locked on Rose's momentarily before moving to other cats, the same discomfort filled her from ears to tail-tip. Why was he so familiar?
"Okay. We'll be patrolling along the far border, just before the twoleg park." Hawk gave intructions, before pushing to the front of the patrol. "Let's go."
"You okay?" Cascade asked Rose as she shook herself from her discomfort.
"Uh.. yeah. I'm just getting used to our new deputy," she responded, taking a step forward to follow the patrol.
The group of scarred and violent looking cats made their way through the alleyways, set at a good pace. Once in a while a trashcan would clang to the ground, or trash would fly againdt the ground as a cat scrambled to get away. Pine spat his disgust about the trespassers when they came and disappeared into view.
The entire way Cascade and Rose chatted, getting to know each other. By the time lots of time passed, Rose and Cascade had grown to know lots about each other, and Rose felt particularly attatched to his calm and friendly manner. Cascade had told him about Rabbit, Bloodclan, and stories from his training. Rose had listened and talked about Bloodclan and her stories as well. As the buildings began to thin, Cascade asked, "You ever been as far as the park?"
"Once," Rose replied, comfortable with the white and gray tom. "I was much younger. I thought my paws would fall off--but I didn't want Ghost to look better than me!" She responded with an amused laugh.
Cascade purred. "I'd never let anyone have advantage over me either."
At that moment Hawk raised his tail. "All clear. The cats have fled,

and we've refilled the alleys with our scent. We're heading back now."
As they turned around, Rose almost bumped straight into Fawn. "Oh--sorry!" She mewed quickly, back pedalling as to not crash into the she-cat. "Oh, no problem at all, sweetheart!" She reassured, eyes bright and voice high-pitched. "You have a cute collar."
Rose felt warmed at the compliment, but felt again a bit insecure about her unthreatening appearance. "Oh. Thank you."
Fawn noddded, and angled her ears for Rose to go on.
Rose turned and began to pac forward, but slowed her pace to near Fawn. Cascade noticed this and flicked his tail over her shoulder to indicate his departure, and he turned towards Thorn.
"How did you join Bloodclan?" Rose asked.
"Oh, I was born into it. Willow was a great mother. But ah, she's getting old," Fawn fretted. "Scourge always banished old cats. I doubt Abyss is any different." Fawn glanced at Rose. "Is she? You're were her denmate."
"Um, no, i'm afraid she's not," Rose informed sympathetically. "She idolized Scourge. Wanted to be just like him."
"Well, she got her wish," Fawn muttered.
"Do *you* have any siblings?" Rose asked the small she-cat.
"Oh, *of course,"* Fawn purred. "You know Jynx?"
Rose shook her head slightly. "I'm afraid not."
"Well, we fought all the time! And I always one! And Willow's friend, Wyvern, also had kits. Red and Cracked Brick. I was always victorious when it came to battle!"
Rose blinked in disbelief. But she was so small. "Can you still beat them in battle?"
"Probably," Fawn shrugged. "Dunno for sure."
Rose was extremely curious to know how she managed to fight. That was probably the reason she was allowed to stay. "Hey, maybe we can train together sometime."
"Curious?" Fawn purred. "Don't worry, everyone always is. And yeah--you're cool. We can totally train sometime."
Rose smiled and nodded, and the patrol travelled back.
As they neared Bloodclan's clearing, Hawk called, "Good work everyone. I'll let Abyss know of the successful patrol."